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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: AYMAN NOUR LETTER TO AMBASSADOR: I WANT AN  
HONORABLE RELEASE

REF: CAIRO 359

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs  
William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a verbose six-page handwritten Arabic letter to the Ambassador, delivered to the Embassy late on March 3, imprisoned former Al Ghad party leader Ayman Nour makes clear his preference that, "if there has been no specific and serious talk" from the GOE about his being released, the USG speak more "publicly and clearly" about Nour's case. In apparent response to the possibility of his leaving Egypt for a sabbatical in return for an early release from prison (reftel), Nour emphatically rejects the option, noting that, "For it is either an honorable release that allows me to carry on with my role and message, or death here would be more honorable." The jailed former opposition leader asks that the Ambassador nominate him for an "international human rights award," seemingly hoping that this would draw more attention to his case, and thus increase pressure on the Egyptian government to release him. Nour spends much of the letter defending against GOE accusations against him, particularly the false charge that he accepted USG funding, and is also highly critical of Cairo's liberal political elite. He asks that his appreciation be passed to the Secretary, as well as his hope that he will meet her soon. End summary.

12. (C) Begin text of Embassy translation of letter:

Torah El Mazra'ah Prison  
South Cairo  
March 1, 2008

Excellency, Dear Honorable Ambassador Ricciardone, my greetings and appreciation,

It gives me great pleasure and moves me to write to you, with deep gratitude, this belated personal message, which coincides with the end of your official mission in Cairo, which will preserve your name and your lofty status, which has demonstrated itself during the past years, that were quite difficult ... but this is always the destiny of great men.

You have done well, excelled and succeeded, as much as you could. You bravely entered, with reason and wisdom, into landmines. Some repeatedly tried to suggest that you withdrew upon stepping into them, but time proved that you were seeking to delay the explosion of that which you could not avoid, according to a diplomatic school than is linked, and will continue to be, to the name and person of Ricciardone, in the minds of those who agreed or disagreed with it, but all undoubtedly respected and valued it, and I am at the forefront of them.

So, congratulations to you for your success, and for exerting a sincere effort which regrettably has not yet yielded its fruits. I congratulate you from my heart, before you leave your position, and hope that your great nation has many icons like you, that carry their messages to the highest peaks of civility with a spirit of communication, and adherence to justice and the values of freedom.

Mr. Ambassador, how I wish to win my freedom, so that I could meet you, even just once, to directly thank you sincerely for the appreciated and continuous efforts over the past years since your arrival to Cairo. But my thanks will have to remain seared in my memory to present to you personally when you return as a dear guest to our country and our homes which will always be honored by you.

I believed and still do, that sacrifices and great deeds are never wasted. This is what the history of our ancient nation taught us and also the history of nations dreaming of progress, freedom, and peace, and having faith that the most wonderful thing about sunrise moments, is that they are born out of the womb and heart of pitch-black darkness, and that most beautiful thing about achieving big hopes and wonderful dreams, is that they come to diffuse the pains of labor of these hopes and dreams, and spread joy and happiness, with the same amount of pain and sacrifices that this kind, peaceful, and freedom-loving nation deserves and more.

Mr. Ambassador, never was I worried or hasty or prepared to give in addition to sacrifices, compromises, that would make my generation and the generations after despair or give up; for what we believe ) and will continue to believe ) is that our country deserves better than this.

Not at all. I do not seek just any release from this prison, no matter how cruel and unjust it is, despite the price it has cost my freedom, health and maybe even my life too! And even its costly price for my family, children and supporters. For it is either an honorable release that allows me to carry on with my role and message, or death here would be more honorable.

For if I could accept otherwise, I would have accepted since Day One similar offers and would have gotten out, sacrificing everything I have struggled for, since I was student body president, then a pillar of Al Wafd party and a godson to its late leader, then a parliamentary representative of this nation from 1995 until 2005, and finally a first-runner up to the President in the first presidential elections, representing a young party, that was not born ) like some imagine - in 2004 but rather was born in our hearts and minds since we took our first steps in the school of Egyptian Liberalism, becoming a legitimate son of the effort of years of work with the people, in the street and in parliament.

Mr. Ambassador, my wife Gameela conveyed to me important words about her most recent meeting with you. I think I answered some of it in my previous lines. But Mr. Ambassador, she conveyed to me as well impressions, that I think it is my right that you hear my opinion about.

Yes, I know the volume of distorted and trumped-up pictures they always tried to export to your Excellency about me since you started your assignment, and maybe even to your predecessor.

I also know that some of the political elite close to you does not have positive feelings for me, for reasons that are political and interest-related sometimes, and also human and natural, most of the time, and generational too (and I will explain this later). In general, I understand the authority's motives, and understand even more and more the motives of some of this elite, which always and historically was strained in its relationship with the street, the people, the regime and the other, and which settles for the honor of "stylish" struggle in receptions, cocktail parties, Rotary seminars, and so forth. This elite always prefers sitting in

balcony seats, and is neither among the audience in the hall, nor on the theater with actors, but rather settles for the role of the theorist, the critic, and the expert who has nothing to offer except apprehension, mega-fears, and suspicions, that justify its weakness and fear, especially in the face of another's intrepidity.

Mr. Ambassador, coincidence does not give birth! And if coincidence helps a person, he can never continue as a real number in the equation of political, parliamentary, and partisan life for over a quarter of a century! A quarter of a century in the ranks of opposition without any support, other than Allah's and the truthfulness and the honor of my word.

Dear Sir, I was never a manipulator nor a deceiver as some want to depict me, so as to justify to himself what he did to me in manipulation, deceit, fabrication and betrayal. What was between me and him ) personally at least - does not justify what he did!

As for he who says he had other issues than this case, but he settled, he is honest! Because he has the tools to make and create anything and everything. He made this fabricated case into flesh and blood, purporting also that I ) like he told your Excellency - was getting millions of dollars from you! And you of course know better, that I did not get from you or anyone else a penny before, during or after the presidential elections and until now. So, you can assess the veracity of the rest of the accusations, based on his confidence in this accusation, to the point that makes him repeat it to you.

Sir, how I wished you would have denied to him this illusion, for which I am being held unjustly accountable every day and every moment and by which I am flogged in their media and newspapers, which have come to deal with this false accusation as a universal truth!

I wish you could listen to "Ian," this man who used to attend the hearings of my farcical trials, and listened like me in every hearing to accusations by the court of raising "haram" (forbidden) millions of Condoleezza Rice's dollars, as the accusations were formulated and tossed publicly to raze before my eyes 40 years ) which was my age at the time - that I lived honorably, relying on my effort and my father's money, who could not bear all this injustice and who died during the trial. Leaving me the money he had collected - as a lawyer for 40 years and a representative of the nation -

not a penny of which that came to him was "haram"! And here I am and my children still, until now, living off of what is left of his money and selling his assets inherited from his father and grandfather, so that we may live minimally with honor and dignity that allows me to buy my medicine and pay the college fees of my children.

Mr. Ambassador, do you want to know the truth? Very briefly, the battle we contested with our blood, be it in establishing the party, or in the presidential elections battle, unveiled one truth that made us happy and scared them, and that is: That the street was better than everyone.

For despite the fear, despair, and frustration, the street was open-hearted and open-minded to us. It was happy with a civil dream that was reasonable. Unfortunately, time was very limited, and the pressures, trials and distortion was also very fierce and influential, positively and sympathetically with some and the opposite with some others. Notwithstanding, the regime and our competitors among the elite were sure that we had hit upon the beginning of the right path. So the blows came down violently and cruelly, even more than what is directed sometimes to the Muslim Brothers, and in an alliance that even the MB's took part in. Because they know the gravity of introducing an accepted reasonable civil liberal alternative, born outside the womb of this authority and the "elite" minority, and which is not rejected internally or externally.

And despite being in poor financial straits, the lack of

financial capabilities, and with only limited time, we managed in 89 days to make a party, or the project of a real party, and in 18 days, we managed to undertake a presidential elections campaign. And after all this, it was natural to become a target for those who fear us. And also a target for those whom we have laid bare their incapacity - the meager elite, which is distant from the language and culture of the people.

Mr. Ambassador, if we were nothing, or, as some claim, merely a political illusion, then why don't they leave me in the street? Does an "illusion" ) just an illusion - merit all these sacrifices from them? To keep me behind bars? And moreover to insist on jailing me even inside my prison, with all forms of arbitrariness, and waste of human rights which icons of terrorism, crime, the MBs and others enjoy? Do you, with your long experience, believe this claim?

Mr. Ambassador, the Egyptian Liberal movement has not, in a half century, presented sacrificial victims. That is why its last public icons were the ones that pre-1952 events created, and which have disappeared in recent years. Whereas the Islamic movement, has in the period from 1952 until now, has been the sole movement to present sacrificial victims who were sent to the prisons. And I think that what I have faced, so far, will at least deprive them from claiming that they are the only ones to pay that price. And that is a consideration, always before our eyes.

Does this mean I do not want to get out of prison?

Of course not.

We are fighting to get out of prison for two reasons:

- To continue the journey, and,
- So that people do not feel that there is no hope, and that the state always does what it wants even to someone backed by forces supportive of freedom. For you cannot imagine the amount of frustration of young reformers, who were almost liberated from fear during the battle of 2005, because of my continuing imprisonment.

The goal of an honorable release is to give them back confidence in the world standing with freedom, and the credibility of those who announced in 2004-2005 they side with democratic reform and freedom.

Mr. Ambassador, my continuing imprisonment, is an imprisonment of the credibility of everyone, an imprisonment of the credibility of hope in change. An imprisonment of the ability of a generation, and maybe coming generations, to be liberated from fear and fabrication, from severing heads and incomes, and shutting down newspapers and stealing political parties. And this Sir, is the horse's tail (i.e. the point).

Finally, the more important question in my view remains: What do we (Ayman Nour) want from you (USG) today? And tomorrow? What do we want from you personally? And what do we want from

the dear guest (e.g., the Secretary) who will arrive Tuesday? Clearly and very frankly, if there is no specific and serious talk (about my being released) ) clearly different than what has been offered in the past - then announce your position publicly and clearly.

Keep our case open and on the table, all the time, every moment and in every circle and meeting. Do not let it die, out of patience and waiting by you, and oppression and injustice by them. If it is my fortune to die here, through illness, without treatment, or through pre-meditated murder, I am in both cases, killed by the action of inaction, and my children and family are the responsibility of all the free people of the world. And should Allah destine that I live, until the end of this unjust penalty (another year and 4 months), then please support the just cause of our party, which was stolen along with the effort of my lifetime.

Finally, and this is more important in my view, and that of those surrounding me: Support nominations that were adopted by some voices in the media and parliaments, recommending my nomination for human rights and international humanitarian awards. For these may be the sole means now, and could be an influential pressure card, to preserve the last chances of life, and survival (media-wise and politically and realistically) for our cause and our party, and to ruin the scheme to strangle us tightly, adamantly, violently, and cruelly, which is what we are facing now, along with taking advantage of every opportunity to clear us of the stigma of alleged U.S. funding, in accordance with the truth and reality. This stigma which hounds us and which has done us injustice and over which hangs the silence of those who know the truth does us injustice. And we are done injustice by those who do not want to know the truth and those who want to believe lies. And we believe your Excellency's media and political wisdom can handle this, even if subtly.

Mr. Ambassador, this way I have emptied all that I have in my quiver and my heart, hoping that my final lines of my first personal letter to you, and perhaps the last in your current capacity and God willing it will not be the last one to your dear person, for whom you and your family, I wish every happiness and success in every aim you pursue and every step you take.

I also hope, if the circumstances of our dear guest arriving Tuesday permit, God willing, that you convey to her from me greetings of appreciation and special gratitude and eagerness for a meeting soon in Cairo or Washington. I also hope that you pass to her a summary of my message to your Excellency and wish that should it be a part of her schedule, this time or during any other visit, to meet with leaders of parties and civil society organizations, that Al Ghad party be represented by Hisham Kassem and also Gameela Ismail, not necessarily as my wife, but as the vice-president of the party.

I repeat my deep apology for the lengthiness, and maybe my excuse is that it is a message into which I pour my eagerness for a meeting that has not been achievable for years, hoping that we meet very soon.

Yours truly,

Dr. Ayman Nour  
March 1, 2008  
Torah El Mazra'ah General Prison  
South Cairo

P.S.: Apologies again. Enclosed with the letter is a memo with the most recent grave developments and infractions, which I hope to put before your eyes and the eyes of our guest; and anyone concerned with following-up on these developments, especially during Sorour's visit to Washington.  
(Note: No memo was enclosed. End note.)

End text of Embassy translation of letter.

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